



MEDIA CONTACT:
Laurel Johnson, PIO
O: 231-347-5628
l.johnson@nwhealth.org
www.nwhealth.org

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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 Vaccination Timeline and Important Vaccine Information

Last week, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) updated the COVID-19 vaccine eligibility and timeline for receiving the vaccine for the state of Michigan as local vaccine supply allows. As a result of this change, we have experienced a high call volume and received numerous questions from our residents that we want to address.

Unlike flu clinics, which thousands of residents have attended over the years, the health department's COVID-19 clinics will look quite different due to the specific requirements of the vaccine, and the necessary safety measures for administration during the continued pandemic response.

Here are some frequent questions asked by the community:

- How do I get an appointment to receive my vaccine?
 - Those interested in receiving a COVID-19 vaccination should complete the Pre-Registration Vaccine Information Form. Seniors who are not able to complete the form should call the Senior Vaccination Hotline at 231-715-5557. Please complete either the form or call the hotline; it is not necessary to do both.
- How do I know when it's my turn to get the vaccine?
 - Once you've completed the Pre-Registration Vaccine Information Form or called the Senior Vaccination Hotline, your name and contact information is part of a database and used to schedule upcoming clinics.
- What happens if someone does not show up to get their shot?
 - All clinics require patients to be registered and given an appointment. If someone is not able to attend their scheduled appointment, a standby list is activated.
- How are the vaccines stored?
 - Each vaccine manufacturer requires different storage and handling requirements. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine can be stored at a "normal" freezer temperature and all local health departments have those storage capabilities. The Pfizer vaccine has the deep freeze storage requirements and only two local health departments in northern Michigan have the capability to safely store the Pfizer vaccine. Both of these health departments serve as hub facilities to store and then safely distribute the Pfizer vaccine to other area health departments. This process takes up a lot of planning and coordination among the health departments.
- Does the health department receive a certain amount of vaccine each day?
 - The health departments request vaccines on a weekly basis from MDHHS. The state determines the number of vaccines received locally. Once the vaccines are received by

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the local health departments, they are logged, stored, and appointments are scheduled for those doses or in some cases, doses may be transferred to other enrolled providers in the region to increase the number of access points available.

- Why can't I get an appointment now that I am eligible, and why does it seem to take so long to get an appointment?
 - We understand there may be frustration, but due to the demand for the vaccine and our weekly allocations of the COVID-19 vaccine, it will take time to get all residents in Phase 1B vaccinated. We are excited to have received more than 9,000 requests to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and are trying to match these requests with our supply. We ask for patience as we work to vaccinate everyone quickly and safely.
- Why do I need an appointment to get the COVID-19 vaccine?
 - We must continue to protect our staff/volunteers and anyone receiving the vaccine, we must schedule appointments for vaccination to maintain safety of all in attendance including maintaining social distance recommendations, cleaning procedures, and PPE needs. Another main reason we need to schedule appointments is to ensure all doses available for that clinic are utilized, we do not overbook the clinic, and we follow the required storage and handling for the vaccine.

“We want to set the realistic expectations of what the general public can expect as they get ready to receive their vaccine,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director. “This process is not going to happen immediately, and we need residents to be patient as we continue to vaccinate those in the first priority groups. Phase 1B will begin shortly and we will start with those at the top of our list. First and foremost, our goal is to safely administer this critical vaccine to our community residents. We thank you for your patience as we plan through all of the complexities of changing guidance and limited vaccine allocations.”

Currently, the health department is working to complete vaccination clinics for those in the Phase 1A group, which includes healthcare workers and medical first responders. Next, as directed by the MDHHS, are those in Phase 1B and individuals aged 65 and older. In northern Michigan, this represents thousands of eligible individuals. Vaccine appointments depend on both vaccine supply and staffing capacity to host the clinics.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan reported 24 new cases on January 9: Antrim (9), Charlevoix (4), Emmet (8), and Otsego (3) counties, and 1 COVID-19 associated death in Antrim county. On January 10 we reported 14 new cases: Antrim (3), Charlevoix (6), Emmet (2), and Otsego (3) counties. Today, January 11, we are reporting 17 new cases: Antrim (3), Charlevoix (9), and Emmet (5) counties.

As of 4 p.m. today, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (748), Charlevoix (903), Emmet (1,294), and Otsego (1,062);
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (510), Charlevoix (727), Emmet (1,021) and Otsego (827);

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- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (13), Charlevoix (10), Emmet (33), and Otsego (25).

The State of Michigan is reporting 523,618 cases and 13,408 deaths; and as of January 8, cumulative recovered cases: 415,079.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).

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